

SECRET INVASION™

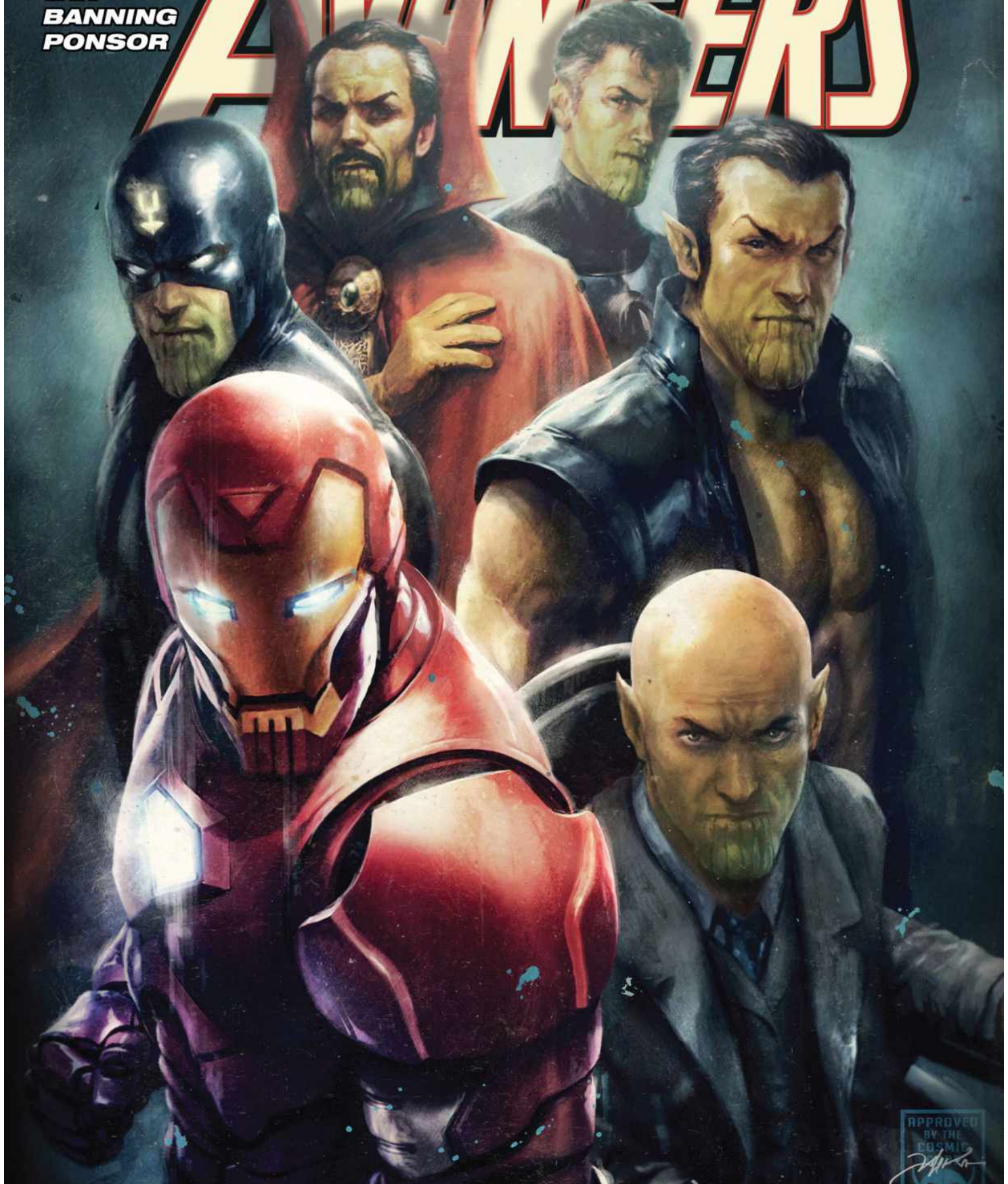
MARVEL

WWW.MARVEL.COM

44

**BENDIS
TAN
BANNING
PONSOR**

THE NEW AVENGERS®



APPROVED
BY THE
COSMIC
COUNCIL

And there came a day, a day unlike any other, when Earth's Mightiest Heroes found themselves united against a common threat! On that day, the Avengers were born, to fight the foes no single super hero could withstand!

THE NEW AVENGERS

The Illuminati is a secret organization comprised of several of the world's most powerful heroes: Sorcerer Supreme Doctor Strange; King of the Inhumans Black Bolt; founder of the X-Men and mutant rights activist Charles Xavier; founding member of the Fantastic Four Reed Richards; King of Atlantis Namor the Sub-Mariner; and founding member of the Avengers Iron Man a.k.a. Tony Stark.

These six men have secretly worked together to mold and shape the status of not only the superhuman world, but the civilian one as well.

Years ago, after the legendary Kree/Skrull war, the group traveled to the Skrull Throneworld to tell the shape-shifting alien race that they would not tolerate any more attempts at an Earth invasion.

Things did not go well. They were briefly detained, but eventually escaped.

Now, years later, we know that the Skrulls infiltrated Earth, an invasion masterminded by religious extremists who believe that the Earth is part of the Skrull empire.

But back then, who could be the wiser? And when there was no known means of detecting these new Skrulls, how could the Illuminati trust anyone to be who they seemed to be...including themselves?

BRIAN MICHAEL BENDIS
WRITER

BILLY TAN
PENCILS

MATT BANNING
INKS

JUSTIN PONSOR
COLORIST

RS & COMICRAFT'S ALBERT DESCHESNE
LETTERER

ALEKSI BRICLOT
COVER ARTIST

JOE SABINO
PRODUCTION

JEANINE SCHAEFER
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

TOM BREVOORT
EDITOR

JOE QUESADA
EDITOR IN CHIEF

DAN BUCKLEY
PUBLISHER











NO.
NO, WE--

WE
GOT ON A
TRANSPORT
SHIP AND
WE--

EVERYONE
STOP.
STOP
TALKING.



I--

I DON'T
HAVE MY
POWERS.

WHAT
DOES THIS
MEAN?

ARMOR?
ARMOR?
CODE
LEVEL SITMA
FIVE.

WHAT
DOES THIS
MEAN?

ARMOR?
OH, MAN...

IT MEANS
WE SHOULD GET THE
HELL OUT OF HERE.



PLEASE
DON'T DO THAT,
KREE-SPAWN.



WHAT
IS THIS? HOW
HAVE YOU DONE
THIS?

SIT
DOWN AND CALM
DOWN.

IS THIS
YOUR DOING?
HAVE YOU
BETRAYED
US?

SIT
DOWN.



BY ALL THAT
I HOLD DEAR, I PROMISE
YOU, YOU AND YOUR ENTIRE
FAMILY WILL PAY
FOR--

THIS
EXPERIMENT IS
TERMINATED.







PRIEST OF THE
SCIENCE...PLEASE
NOTE IN MY NAME.
SESSION 21 IS
TERMINATED.

NAME
IT WHAT IT IS--
A FAILURE.

IT
WAS NOT A
FAILURE.

THE CLONEPOD
HUMAN DUPLICATIONS
ARE TERMINATED. NO
PROGRESS WAS MADE.

MY
APOLOGIES, PRIEST
GALAN...

WHAT
WOULD YOU
HAVE ME DO
NOW?

YOU HAVE
NOTHING TO APOLOGIZE
FOR, WARRIOR. YOUR
ORDERS WERE CLEAR.

YOU ARE
HONORABLY
DISMISSED, GOOD
WARRIOR. WE WILL
CALL FOR YOU IN
ANOTHER TIME.

PROGRESS
WAS MADE, PRIEST
GALAN. WE NOW KNOW
THAT THE--

STOP
TALKING.

FRY'LU, WHY DID YOUR
MENTAL PROJECTIONS
FAIL ON THE MINDS OF THE
CLONED HUMANS?

YOU WERE TO KEEP
THE ILLUSION OF THEIR
ESCAPE FROM THE
EMPIRE COMPLETE.

MY APOLOGIES,
BUT THE HUMAN
MIND--

THEY
CHOSE NOT TO
ACCEPT THE
ILLUSION.

TRUTH AS TOLD,
HOLDING THE ILLUSION FOR
ALL *SIX* OF THEM MAY HAVE
HAMPERED MY ABILITY TO
KEEP THE *PRECISENESS*
OF THE MENTAL
SUGGEST--

WHAT'S
HAPPENED
HERE?



MY KING.

I OFFER MY HUMBLEST, MOST SINCERE--

ONE WOULD GUESS THAT NO PROGRESS WAS MADE HERE.

WE WILL START THE CLONEPOD PROCESS AGAIN.

THAT YOU SHALL.



PROGRESS WAS MADE, YOUR HIGH--

DRO'BE! DO NOT SPEAK TO OUR KING OUT OF TURN!



SPEAK THAT WHICH YOU KNOW IS TRUE.

MY WORDS IN YOUR HONOR, SIR, THE CLONEPOD OF REED RICHARDS HAD SURMISED AN IDEA BY WHICH WE COULD PREVAIL.

THE INFORMATION FOR OUR SUCCESS IS IN HIS MIND.

BUT HE DIDN'T GET A CHANCE TO COMMIT IT BEFORE THE ILLUSION FAILED US.

YOUR HIGHNESS, YOUR EXCELLENCE, IF I MAY...

WE DON'T NEED TO DUPLICATE THE ENTIRE GROUP OF HUMANS.

WE ONLY NEED WHAT IS IN THE MIND OF REED RICHARDS.

I UNDERSTAND *WHY* YOU WANT US TO INTERROGATE THE ENTIRE GROUP.

THESE ARE THE GREATEST HUMAN ENEMIES OF THE SKRULL EMPIRE AND THEY MUST BE PUNISHED...

BUT THESE THINGS--THEY ARE NOT *REAL*. THEY ARE SYNTHETIC DUPLICATIONS.

WE CAN KEEP DUPLICATING THEM AND TORTURING THEM OVER AND OVER FOR AS LONG AS YOU'D LIKE...

WE CAN CREATE A REED RICHARDS CLONEPOD AND PUT IT IN YOUR CHAMBERS FOR YOU TO DO WITH AS YOU'D LIKE FOR AS LONG AS YOU'D LIKE...



BUT...



BUT THE EMPIRE NEEDS *ANSWERS* THAT WE DO NOT HAVE AND WE NOW KNOW THAT THE ANSWER IS IN THIS MIND.

WITH RESPECT TO YOUR THRONE—THE ONLY WAY TO DO THAT IS TO TAKE THE CLONED ILLUSION OF SELF TO A DIFFERENT STAGE.



MAY WE PLEASE, WITH YOUR ORDER, MOVE TO A NEW AREA OF EXPERIMENTATION TOWARDS THIS GOAL.



IF THE MIND OF REED RICHARDS HOLDS THE KEY TO OUR FUTURE...

WHY CANNOT YOU, THE PRIEST OF THE MIND, TAKE IT *OUT* OF HIS MIND?

BLESSED BE YOUR NAME...

I SIMPLY AM NOT SMART ENOUGH IN THE AREAS OF THE SCIENCES TO UNDERSTAND THE THOUGHTS IT IS THINKING.

THEY ARE BEYOND MY LEARNINGS.



IT IS FRUSTRATING THAT WE KNOW SO MUCH MORE THAN THESE MUD-WALKERS...

...AND YET THE ONE THING WE DO NOT KNOW, *HE* KNOWS.



BUT ONCE THE PUZZLE IS SOLVED...

THE IRONY THAT IT WAS THE MIND OF REED RICHARDS THAT BROUGHT THE SKRULL EMPIRE THE EARTH IN ITS ENTIRETY...

...WILL BE A *LEGEND* THAT IS SPOKEN OF TILL THE END OF DAYS.













FRANKLIN?

DADDY,
I CAN'T
SLEEP.

COME
HERE, BUDDY.
WHAT'S THE
MATTER?



I KEEP
THINKING ABOUT
THE ALIENS.

ALIENS?

I HEARD
UNCLE JOHNNY
TALKING TO UNCLE
BEN.

THERE'RE
NO ALIENS
HERE.

THE
SKRULLS.



YEAH? WHAT DID UNCLE
JOHNNY SAY?

HE SAID THEY CAN
CHANGE THEIR SHAPE SO
THEY LOOK LIKE US.

WELL, THAT'S
NOT SOMETHING
YOU NEED TO--

HE SAID
THEY *HATE* YOU. HE
SAID THEY WERE GOING
TO COME HERE AND
TAKE YOU AWAY.

WELL, THEY ARE
VERY, VERY FAR AWAY
AND THEY CAN'T GET IN
HERE, H.E.R.B.I.E. WILL
SEE TO THAT.

HOW DO
YOU KNOW?! HOW
DO YOU KNOW
THEY AREN'T HERE



BECAUSE I KNOW.



MAYBE MOMMY'S A SKULL.

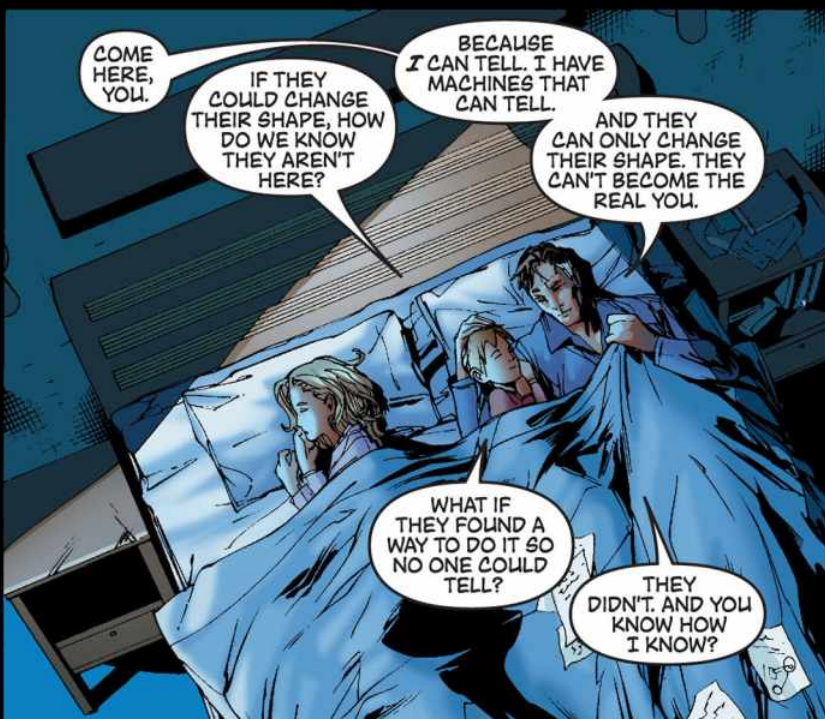
NOT A SKULL.
GO BACK TO SLEEP.



SEE? DOES THAT SOUND LIKE AN ALIEN?

KINDA.

SSSLEEPING.



COME HERE, YOU.

IF THEY COULD CHANGE THEIR SHAPE, HOW DO WE KNOW THEY AREN'T HERE?

BECAUSE I CAN TELL. I HAVE MACHINES THAT CAN TELL.

AND THEY CAN ONLY CHANGE THEIR SHAPE. THEY CAN'T BECOME THE REAL YOU.

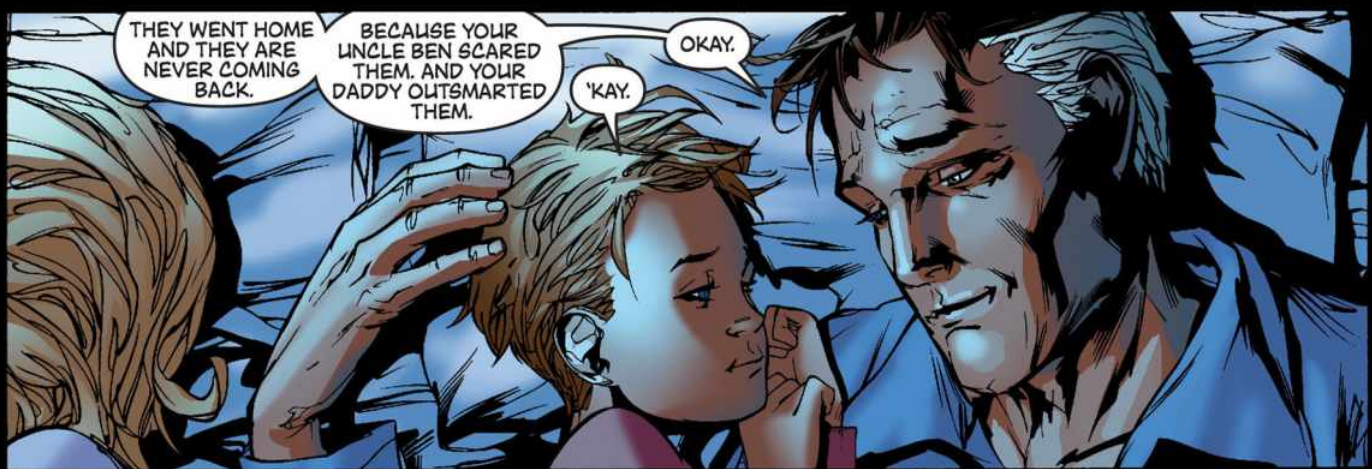
WHAT IF THEY FOUND A WAY TO DO IT SO NO ONE COULD TELL?

THEY DIDN'T. AND YOU KNOW HOW I KNOW?



BECAUSE THEY'D HAVE TO BE AS SMART AS YOU?

AND YOU KNOW WHAT?





WHAT IS THAT?

SOMETHING FRANKLIN MADE ME THINK OF.



SOMETHING THE SKRULLS COULD DO TO THEMSELVES IF THEY EVER--

IS THAT IT?



IS THAT WHAT?



HE THINKS SO.

TERMINATE THE PROGRAM.

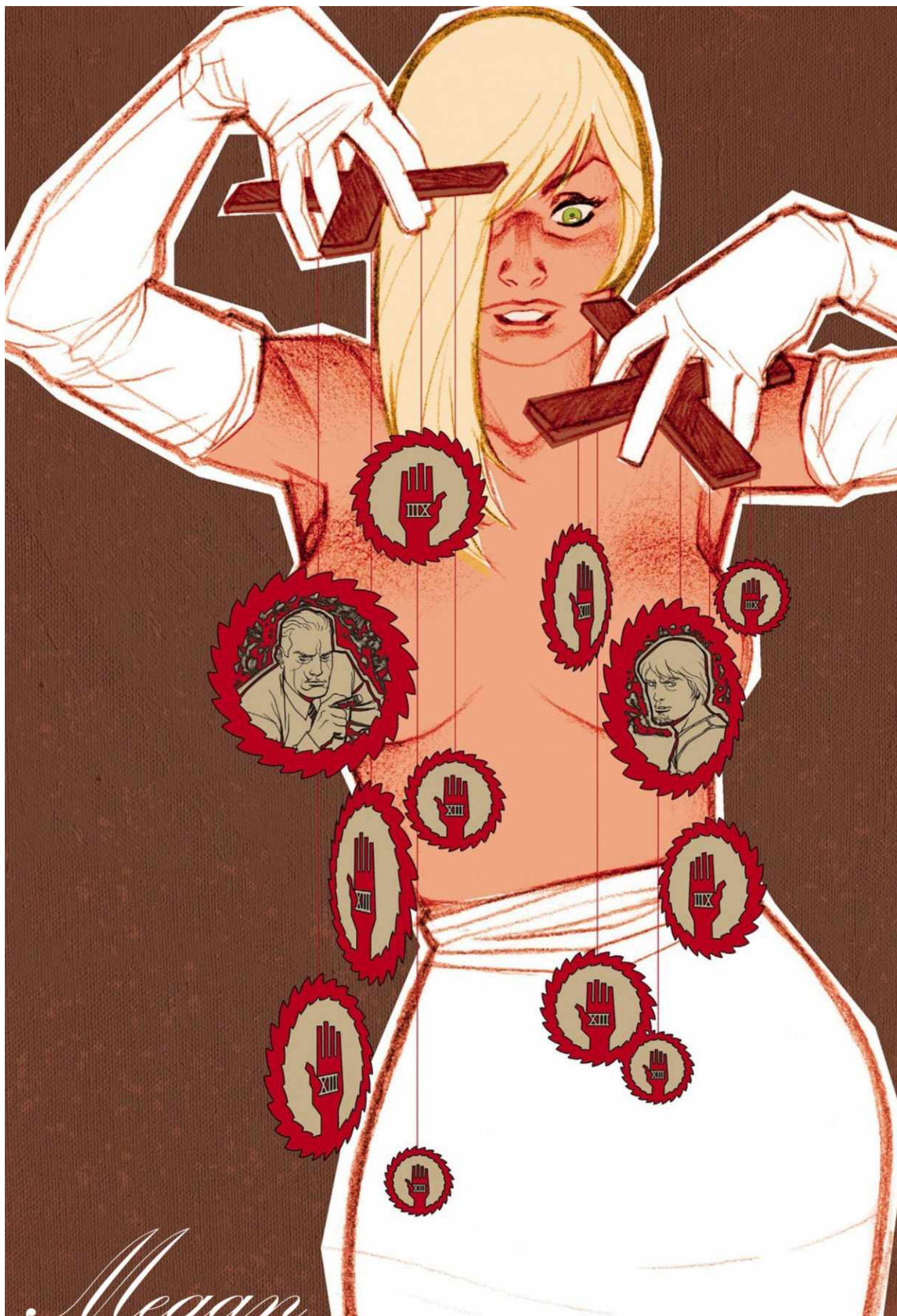
BY YOUR WORD.

FFSSRRRRMM





NEXT: HOUSE OF M



Megan